

EPA REGION 3 ENVIRO-BYTES

A Wrap-Up of Issues & Events in EPA's Mid-Atlantic Region
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CHILDREN'S HAIR TESTS NEGATIVE FOR ARSENIC AT SPRING VALLEY SITE

Hair samples taken from children who attended the day care center on American University's property have come back negative for arsenic, a contaminant that was found on the center's property and throughout the Spring Valley neighborhood in northwest Washington, D.C. The neighborhood was home to a Department of Defense Ordnance production facility which is the source of the arsenic contamination. The Army Corps of Engineers, the D.C. Department of Health and the EPA are developing a joint strategy to test soil at residential properties in the area. This strategy will be discussed with residents at a public meeting planned for March 14.

EPA MEETS WITH LEGISLATORS ON TRANGUCH SPILL SITE IN HAZLETON, PA

EPA personnel met with representatives of Senators Specter and Santorum and Congressman Kanjorski on March 1 in Scranton to discuss the Response and Cleanup Plan which will address

benzene vapors in people's homes in Hazleton. The benzene is entering homes through the townships sewer lines which contain gasoline from an underground spill. The plan outlines the actions EPA proposes to take to protect residential properties from gasoline vapors and to clean up contaminated soil and groundwater.

EPA HOSTS PHILADELPHIA WORKSHOP ON HOW TO REPORT CHEMICALS

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will host the first of 10 workshops in mid-Atlantic cities for businesses to learn how to comply with federal chemical and waste reporting requirements, commonly known as the Toxic Release Inventory (TRI) reporting.

The first workshop will be held at the corporate offices of Crown Cork & Seal in NE Philadelphia on March 5 & 6. Other workshops will be held throughout the spring in Pittsburgh, Meadville and Pittston, Pa.; Richmond and Roanoke, Va.; Baltimore and Hagerstown, Md.; and Charleston, W.Va. The workshops will familiarize facilities with reporting obligations for chemicals that they manufacture, use or store on site. These training courses are designed for persons from industrial and federal facilities responsible for completing EPCRA Section 313 reporting form(s), and consulting firms who may be assisting them.

WESTVACO COVINGTON, VA PERMIT RENEWAL PENDING

The Westvaco Corp. Covington, Va. paper mill permit expired June 6, 1999 and the plant is operating under an administrative continuance. BOD, temperature, color and chronic toxicity outputs are issues. Similar permits have recently been renewed in other states and the effluent limitations of those permits may be compared to develop the effluent limitations of the Westvaco permit. Many of the outstanding issues are grounds for permit objection and a formal response is due March 9.

THREE PA COMPANIES FAIL TO REPORT CHEMICALS

On February 23, EPA issued notices of noncompliance to three Pennsylvania facilities - Marblux Company, Chambersburg; Watson McDaniel Company, Norristown; and Silicon Power Company, Malvern for toxic chemical release reporting violations. Marblux Company, a manufacturer of cultured marble products, failed to timely submit to EPA and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania a toxic chemical release report for styrene for calendar year 1999. Watson McDaniel Company, a manufacturer of valves and pipe fittings, failed to file for

copper for calendar years 1997, 1998, and 1999. Silicon Power Company, a manufacturer of silicon wafers for the power industry, failed to file for nitric acid for calendar years 1997, 1998, and 1999 and for nitrate compounds for calendar years 1997 and 1998.

EPA AND TEMPLE UNIVERSITY TEAM UP ON PHILADELPHIA FLOWER SHOW

EPA landscape architects are teaming up with Temple University's Department of Landscape Architecture to set up the EPA exhibit for the Philadelphia Flower Show 2001. The EPA/Temple collaboration on an integrated pest management exhibit demonstrates that healthy natural areas have richer species diversity and compatibility of flora and fauna which ensures ecological stability. Visitors will be treated to a display of native plants and shrubs highlighting the benefits of healthy natural areas. The Philadelphia Flower Show opens on March 4 and runs through March 11 at the Pennsylvania Convention Center.

EPA HOSTS DISCUSSION ON LONG-WALL MINING IN PITTSBURGH

On February 22, the EPA sponsored a symposium in Pittsburgh evaluating the subsidence impacts of longwall mining of coal

in southwestern Pennsylvania. Specifically, ponding of perennial streams and water loss in headwater streams were examined. Participants discussed studies they have underway and a U. S. Geological Society proposal to study these environmental impacts. Several agencies have either recently completed, are currently conducting or are proposing studies evaluating these impacts.

COURT UPHOLDS EPA'S APPROVAL OF THE BOROUGH'S PRETREATMENT

In a written decision issued on February 22, the District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania upheld EPA's December 1, 1998 final determination approving both "the need for and the content of the Borough of North East's (Pa.) pretreatment program." Welch Foods, Inc. had brought a complaint against EPA arguing that EPA was arbitrary and capricious when it approved the Borough of North East's pretreatment program. The Environmental Defense section of the United States Department of Justice represented EPA in this action. Welch Foods, Inc. has 30 days in which to file an appeal from this decision.

SUPREME COURT UPHOLDS CLEAN AIR STANDARDS

On February 27, the Supreme Court unanimously rejected industry arguments that EPA officials must balance compliance costs against the health benefits of cleaner air. This ruling is a major triumph for the Clean Air Act since, as a result of this ruling, it now says that the law did not require the government to consider the financial cost for reducing harmful emissions when it sets air quality standards, and that the Administrator is able to enact lawmaking power when she set these tougher standards for ozone back in 1997. However, the court did order EPA to reconsider the standards it set for ozone saying, "the agency's interpretation of a section of the CAA was unreasonable." The court justices ruled against EPA implementation of a revised ozone standard in areas whose ozone levels exceed the maximum allowable amount, so EPA is left with the job of developing a "reasonable interpretation" of the ozone standard.

SECOND-HAND SMOKE EXPOSURE DURING PREGNANCY RAISES ASTHMA RATES

A tip from the American Thoracic Society: Researchers who studied 5,762 school-aged children residing in 12 southern California communities found that exposure to environmental tobacco in the womb increased the rate of physician-diagnosed asthma. Investigators studied responses to a self-

administered questionnaire completed by parents of 4th, 7th , and 10th grade students to ascertain which children had either wheezing or physician-diagnosed asthma.

PUBLIC HEARING PLANNED ON HARRISBURG INCINERATOR PROPOSAL

A public meeting on the Harrisburg incinerator derate proposal and operating permit application has been scheduled for the evening of March 6 at 7 p.m. at the Community Life Building, 1119 S. Cameron St., Harrisburg, PA. Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection Regional Director Michael R. Steiner invited residents to attend the meeting to learn more about PADEP's review of the derate proposal and the operating permit application for the incinerator. Back in December, the city was required to close the incinerator and install equipment to limit the amount of waste it burns because it did not meet new federal clean air standards. This meeting will give residents who live near the incinerator an opportunity to hear about the proposal for additional controls.

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